CONFERENCE CONNECTION
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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

July 15, 2023

Imagine: Renewing Church and Self. It's Possible with Your Support!

by Rev. Kim Wood, Conference Minister

At the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting, held June 2-3 in Atlanta, the theme was "Imagine: Renewing Church and Self." Time and again, as folks talked about renewing the church, conversation turned to nurturing and supporting our youth and young adults. The Fiscal Year 2023 Missional Budget has almost $15,000 focused on youth and young adult initiatives for fellowship and leadership. These funds are focused toward such efforts as staffing our Winter Youth Retreat, planning and preparing for a 2024 Regional Youth Event, supporting and resourcing our local churches seeking to build and sustain youth programs and initiatives, as well as creating avenues for resource sharing. It includes offering training opportunities, such as Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum training, for children and youth program leaders, and developing and locating tools for such topics as gun violence, racism, and social justice.

Renewing our commitment to supporting, nurturing, and cultivating leadership in our children, youth, and young adults in the Southeast Conference is crucial, not only to their well-being, but also to our way forward as the Church. It's possible with your support!

Please consider supporting the Southeast Conference commitment to the youngest generations of the church by making a significant gift to the SECUCC Friends of the Conference Fund. Whether that means $1 or $1,000 (or maybe even more), your contribution will help us move beyond imagining to doing. If you are an individual who understands that our youth

are not just our future, they are our NOW, I urge you go to https://southeastconferenceunitedchurchofchrist-bloom.kindful.com/ and donate to the Friends of the Conference. If you are a local congregation, I invite you to go beyond your OCWM giving with an extra gift/offering for the Friends of the Conference Fund. Together, our gifts, big and small, make a difference in how we resource our youth and youth leaders. It's possible, with your support!

News from the Conference Office

It's a Wrap! – General Synod 2023

The 34th General Synod of the United Church of Christ met June 30 – July 4 in Indianapolis, IN. Delegates and associate delegates, honored ecumenical and international guests, visitors, and Conference and National Setting staff gathered for this, historically, biennial event. If you haven't yet attended a General Synod or don't know what it is, per the United Church of Christ Constitution:

- *The General Synod is the gathering of a faith community representative of the wider church to listen for and discern the call of God to the United Church of Christ. The General Synod deliberates, discerns, and identifies the mission of the wider church of the United Church of Christ in God's world and receives and offers suggestions, invitations, challenges, and assistance in covenant with Local Churches, Conferences, and other settings as they engage in mission together. The General Synod is the representative body of the United Church of Christ and is composed of voting delegates, as described in the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ. There shall also be associate delegates and ecumenical delegates, without vote, as determined by the Bylaws of the United Church of Christ or action of the General Synod.*

Thank you to the members of the Southeast Conference Delegation who attended on our behalf:

Delegates

- Grant Carodine
- Rev. Eddie Colf
- Tommy Hill
- Casey Moran
- Joseph "Jody" Thornton

- ivy tillman

Associate Delegates

- Rev. Richard Barham, Southeast Conference Moderator
- Rev. Kim Wood, Conference Minister

Thank you, also, to Rev. Heather Fosburgh, our own Associate Conference Minister, who served as Floor Parliamentarian for this General Synod. Congratulations on a job well done!

General Synod is much more than a business meeting. It is an opportunity for people from across the United Church of Christ, both laity and clergy and from our varied ministry settings, to connect, worship, explore, learn, pray, and play together. Some people love the work and discernment process of being a delegate. Others take on leadership roles at Synod. And still others enjoy the freedom of attending as a visitor.

Mark your calendars now for July 11-15, 2025 and consider attending the 35th General Synod, to be held in Kansas City, KS/MO. And stay tuned for more information from our delegation about General Synod 2023!

Thank you to our Synod social media guru JR Finney for the pics! View more photos from General Synod on our Facebook page.

Synod Highlights from Delegate Rev. Eddie Colf

The 34th General Synod of the United Church Christ met the first week of July in Indianapolis, Indiana. Lively worship, passionate activism, and a still-speaking Spirit permeated a busy week in Indy.

At Synod the wider church elected a new president and general minister, the Reverend Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson. She is well known within the national setting as the former Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries and Operations in the UCC and Co-Executive for Global Ministries with the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). After eight years in the role of President and General Minister, the wider church said a gratitude filled goodbye to the Reverend John Dorhauer.

Rev. Cameron Barr and the United Church of Christ Board (UCCB) recommended to the Synod an increase in the amount of time between Synod gatherings from every two years to every three years. They also recommended increasing the service term of board members from six year terms to nine year terms. A deeply divided synod passed these recommendations with a razor-thin margin of just one vote. For the first time in eleven synods, a minority report was attached to the passing resolution. The report encourages the UCCB to investigate ways to provide for fellowship and the church's responsibility to speak prophetically to culture since Synod gatherings will take place less frequently.

It's time to update our UCC History and Polity materials. The story(s) (many of us may be familiar with) about the founding of the United Church of Christ received a long overdue revision. The story we have told ourselves is one of the merging of the Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed denominations; four theological streams merging into two and uniting into one United Church of Christ.

This Synod took an important step in confronting our own white supremacy. The story of the Afro-Christian Convention of 1892 was brought into sharper relief as an important part of the UCC story. Founded just fifteen years after the Evangelical Synod of North America and forty years before the Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed denominations, the Afro-Christian Convention was always a part of the UCC story. The Rev. Yvonne Delk's recent publication of *Afro-Christian Convention* has contributed significantly to our understanding of its importance. Recognition of this part of Afro-Christian history as one of the five streams of the UCC could not come at a more meaningful moment than now, when we have elected Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson as our new General Minister.

Synod passed several bold resolutions of witness with overwhelming support. Ministers and laity within the Southeast Conference played significant roles in drafting and revising a resolution affirming transgender and gender diverse persons amid hostile legislation in several states. Significant resolutions passed by synod:

- Affirming Licensed and Commissioned Ministers as Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ
- Denouncing the Dobbs Decision and Proclaiming Abortion as Healthcare
- Calling for a New Study by our Church on our Relationship with the Indian Boarding Schools and the Boarding Schools in Hawai'i
- Calling on the United Church of Christ to Seek Digital Justice and Inclusion
- Urging Planning for and Implementing Electrification
- Faithful Advocacy for Intersectional and Transformational Healing in Harm Reduction
- Affirming Guns to Gardens and Other Gun Violence Prevention Ministries
- Urge All Responsible Entities to Join in Reparations to Fund Christian Hawaiian Language Education Programs
- Promoting freedom from Plastic Pollution
- Supporting Public School Educators, Academic Freedom, and Equity

Efforts in Schools
- Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans
- Condemning Prolonged Solitary Confinement as a Form of Torture
- Affirming the Human Dignity of Transgender and Nonbinary Persons
- Calling on United Church of Christ Local Churches to Witness "A White Supremacy Free Zone" & Confronting White Supremacy

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From our Generosity Coordinator

by Min. Carrole Moss

Greetings all,

Hopefully you are enjoying your summer, your families and vacations. Now that Annual Meeting, General Synod and a list of other obligations have been taken care of, it's time to REFOCUS!

Let's start with Our CHURCHES WIDER MISSIONS, often referred to as OCWM. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PAST AND CONTINUED SUPPORT. EVERY EFFORT IS APPRECIATED!! These are offerings that may be contributed to thru out the year.

Let's start with a plan. Let's RETHINK our giving!
Inform your Church leaders about OCWM. Make sure you prepare and present a draft budget for your congregation to vote on. Be prepared to answer many questions: how much will we tithe to OCWM, what will it take to keep doors open and welcoming etc. these questions should be answered by leadership.

Work toward OCWM GIVING GOALS. REIMAGINE! Work with Church leadership to set attainable goals to increase giving. Begin with short term goals that lead to long term growth! Set goals, establish progression and give regularly. EVERYBODY counts when it comes to OCWM. There are resources available. I am willing and available to visit your congregations to discuss all of these issues, and to supply resource materials. Please contact me and I will gladly provide assistance. REMEMBER: ITS A NEW SEASON, ITS A NEW DAY!

May the rest of summer be filled with unspeakable joy and blessings! Continue to prosper in all that you do.

Blessings, as we continue to journey...TOGETHER, Love and blessings,

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TFAM Holy Convocation Held in the Southeast Conference

The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries held its 2023 Holy Convocation July 5-9, 2023 in Atlanta, GA. The newly elected General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson shared the message during worship on Wednesday evening, and Southeast Conference Minister Rev. Kim Wood brought Episcopal greetings during Saturday morning's worship. TFAM's Presiding Bishop, Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder, provided leadership throughout the event and shared the Good News during closing worship on Sunday.

The Southeast Conference currently has two congregations who are affiliated with TFAM: Real Inspiration Ministries, pastored by Rev. Sonya Williams, and Rehoboth Fellowship UCC, led by Rev. Lavor Troy Sanders. Both churches are located in Atlanta, GA. During worship on Saturday, July 8, Reverends Williams and Sanders were elevated to the office of Bishop in the TFAM organization. We celebrate with Rev. Sonya and Rev. Troy and their families, their congregations, and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. Congratulations, Bishop Williams and Bishop Sanders!

The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) is a trans-denominational, theologically diverse fellowship [1] that reflects a broad theological perspective that embraces aspects of the Pentecostal, Holiness and Charismatic traditions [2]. In 2013, General Synod approved an affirmation of the relationship between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, saying:

- *A unique relationship exists between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. There are United Church of Christ congregations and clergy who are active participants in The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. There are also congregations and clergy within The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries that have a desire to become affiliated with the UCC, and still others that value and support the relationship between the United Church of Christ and The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries but choose not to become a part of the United Church of Christ. — General Synod 29, Long Beach, CA [3]*

The Southeast Conference was proud to provide sponsorship for this year's Holy Convocation through available leadership funds. We look forward to continuing, as designated in the resolution passed at General Synod 29 (https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/gs29minutes.pdf) to "deepening friendship, continuing dialogue, and joint public witness with the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. [4]"

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[1] UCC Manual on Ministry, p. 42.
[2] Minutes of the Twenty-Ninth General Synod, p. 52.
[3] UCC Manual on Ministry, p. 42.
[4] Minuites of the Twenty-Ninth General Synod, p. 53

UCC Campus Ministry at UGA Hosting Event in Atlanta

Are you a graduate of the University of Georgia? Do you have children or grandchildren attending the University of Georgia? Do you love the Georgia Bulldogs?!

The UCC Ministry at the Presbyterian Student Center invites you to a gathering of United Church of Christ members and University of Georgia Alumni/Supporters. Over drinks and snacks, we'll share more about the UCC Campus Ministry happening at UGA all while reminiscing on your favorite memories of Athens and talking about some back-to-back football championships!

When: **6:00 pm on Tuesday, July 18**
Where: **Central Congregational UCC, 2676 Clairmont Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30329**

Register at pscuga.org/events/ucc.

This Month in SEC History: July 2005

by Mike Stroud

Eighteen years ago this month, the Southeast Conference reached perhaps the pinnacle of its 39 years of being when Atlanta played host to the 25th General Synod of the UCC, conducted at the Georgia World Congress Center. It was not only a highly memorable occasion for the SEC faithful, but it made national headlines as well. For during its proceedings on Independence Day, the United Church of Christ became the first major Christian body to endorse the right of Americans to marry those of their choosing, whether the partner be of the opposite sex or the same one.

Numerous people from throughout the Conference provided volunteer help to make every event and amenities flow smoothly. And several figures long associated with the SEC received special honors. Among them were two clergymen: Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann of the Atlanta-area Columbia Theological Seminary and former Ambassador to the United Nations and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young. Both were in good standing with the now-defunct Georgia-South Carolina Association.

But the highlight of all the festivities for many was the release of a long-awaited book about the American Missionary Association, *On the Heels of Freedom*. Written by then-Associate Conference Minister Joyce Hollyday, it dealt with the origins of the AMA in the *Amistad* slave revolt incident of the early 19th century (the subject of a movie) and its subsequent efforts to bring Christianity and education to emancipated slaves in postbellum times. Interviews were also conducted with elder members of the several

African-American congregations deriving from this heritage. The release ceremony was further bolstered by a moving Sunday morning testimony by the Rev. Milton Hurst, who related stories of his Alabama upbringing by his grandparents, who remembered the oppression of slavery as children. Hurst impressed everyone with his operatic-quality voice singing an old spiritual.

All in all, it was a wondrous experience for all involved, and ten years later, same-sex marriage would become permitted throughout the U.S. in a Supreme Court ruling. That was something few if any gathered in Atlanta thought was even a possibility in the near future. It was a Synod, in short, that embodied the renewed Southeast Conference and invigorated existing churches and brought new ones into the fold, most of which are still with the SEC today.

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2023. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of July 2

- Brookemeade Congregational UCC; Nashville, Tennessee
- Tyler Ung
- Courtney Jones
- David Templeton Jr

Week of July 9

- First Congregational UCC; Birmingham, Alabama
- Joylynn Graham
- Shelli Poe
- Phillip Price

Week of July 16

- Forgiving Heart Church; Columbus, GA
- Randy Hammer
- Thomas Query
- David Rivers
- Patricia Keeler

Week of July 23

- Spirit of the Cross, Huntsville, AL
- George Hartz
- John R. Pearson
- Gavin Warren
- Marsha Brown

Week of July 30

- Unity UCC; Montgomery, Alabama
- Kathryn Hauk
- Lewis Kola
- Sonya Gravlee

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN; Brookemeade Congregational, Nashville TN; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; First Congregational Christian, Montgomery AL; Open Table UCC, Mobile AL; Howard Congregational, Nashville TN; Community Congregational, Montgomery AL.

Training Opportunites and Conferences

Healthy Boundary Training for Retired Ministers, Active Clergy

Join Rev. Char Burch on Zoom for Retired Ministers Boundary Training. This training will be from 1pm-4pm Eastern on **Wednesday, September 27** and fulfills the Southeast Conference's Healthy Boundary Training Requirement for those Authorized Ministers who are retired but who are not Exempt. We welcome Retired Ministers from other Associations and Conferences but please check with your Conference/Association first to make sure they will accept our training for their requirement.

You can register here: https://southeastconferenceunitedchurchofchrist-bloom.kindful.com/e/retired-boundary-training-online-offering

If you are not a Retired Minister but need to take Healthy Boundaries Training this year, we still have room for our 201 course on **August 18 and 19** on Zoom (101 pre-required) and for our 101 course (anyone can take) on **November 2 and 3** on Zoom. You can learn more and register for these courses here: https://www.secucc.org/news-and-events/healthy-boundaries-workshops/

Date: October 9-11 (with optional Sunday arrival)

Theme: The Church as it Was > Is > Could Be

Presenter: The Rev. Phiwa [pronounced PEE-wah] Langeni (D.Min.), who currently works at the Center for Analytics, Research & Development, and Data (CARDD) office as the UCC's first Ambassador for Innovation & Engagement.

Registration: Contact Jared Greer, Reservations Manager at Blowing Rock Conference Center @ *jared@brccenter.org* or by calling him at (828) 295-7813.

More Details: https://www.secucc.org/news-and-events/retired-ucc-servants-retreat/

UCC Webinar—UCC Trailblazer, the EPA, and New Grant Programs

Charles Lee, the lead author of the UCC's landmark report on toxic waste and race as well as the lead organizer of the historic First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, will be one of two featured speakers on environmental justice at the EPA. Lee is now the Senior Policy Advisor for Environmental Justice at the EPA. He will be joined by Jacob Burney who directs the Environmental Justice Grants Division at the EPA. In the past year, the EPA has been in the news due to significant institutional changes that have prioritized funding and staffing for environmental

justice. Even if you cannot make the webinar at its scheduled time on August 9 at 2 pm ET, still sign-up, and we will send you a link to a recording of it. Register now!

Job Opportunity

Central Congregational United Church of Christ is seeking a part-time Director of Music (DM).

The DM will be a key member of the worship planning team and will be responsible for the overall musical experience in worship and other music programming in the life of the church. We have ~100 regular attenders in person and via Zoom streaming across two services.

Snapshot:

- Two Sunday morning services – 8:30 (no choir) & 11:00 (choir)
- Weekly Choir rehearsal only on Sunday mornings between services!
- Weekly Worship Planning meeting (~one hour with ministers during week, can be virtual)
- Flexible schedule for personal prep, rehearsing guest musicians, broader planning/administration, etc.
- ~15 hours per week
- Full job description @ Careers – Central Congregational United Church of Christ, Atlanta GA (central-ucc.org)

How to Apply: Submit a cover letter, resume and other relevant materials highlighting qualifications to music@central-ucc.org.

Conference Calendar

August 1 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

August 8 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

August 15 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

August 18 - August 19
Board of Directors Retreat

August 22 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT
Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers

August 22 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

August 29 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

View the full calendar of events online: https://www.secucc.org/events/

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Kim Wood;** kwood@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** hfosburgh@secucc.org

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